

OUR ROOT



A Publication of Ikwere-Ezike writers' Union

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ISBN: 978 – 978 – 950 – 744 - 3

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Acknowledgements

I must first of all thank and praise the Almighty God who made every thing possible. I thank also my colleague, Mr John Nwodo who sat down with me as far back as 1989 to agree on writing for the first time the history of our clan, Umuezike. Despite his fragile health throughout the period of this project, he worked harder than three healthy young men put together.

I shall also commend the effort of my mother, Madam Akarekwe Ochiagha who saw this project as hers. It still beats my imagination that she could provide vital information where even the very elderly men in Uwani-Otobo failed. She probably got all these from my father, Ani Nwokoro who was a good student of Nnadi Ogo Nwugwu, a wise man of his time. She did not stop at only giving me information but also referred me to certain individuals in Umuezike who have good sense of history.

I must thank Amankpo community as a whole for greatly preserving her culture. It was through her elders that we were able to solve the problems of conflicting characters, names and periods of events. We would not have achieved these if Enyi Nwagu Dugwu and Ezike Ode were not around. Their information removed every problem on our way to success. For example, they knew the history of Uwani-Otobo more than even the oldest man in Uwani-Otobo by the time of our research.

I appreciate also the co-operation of the following:

Ek'veue Ochiagha (Ochieka Nwodeke), my uncle who tried as much as he could to help us but when it came to the question of the paternity of Erim he regretted that Nnadi Ogo Nwugwu or Oganenjo Ezea who would have given us all the information we required in this research were no more. Others are Ozo Nwamadi, Ochieka Nwugwu, Ezeamugwu Okenyi, Oruka Ezukwuoke, Paulinus Nwodo, Emmanuel Ezeamagu, Igwebueze Ochieka, Elder Basil Ofie from Ugwunani, Aloysius Ozor from Ugwunani, Dennis Aniakwu from Ohemuje, Stephen Nnadi from Amabokwu and Chris Ona.

My special thanks go to Mrs I.A Ogujawa the administrator of 'The Sproutfield Montessori School, Port-Harcourt. She assigned one of the school laptops to me for this work. I cannot

forget the two lovely Collins-----Collins Onyezere and Collins Obielechi of the school. Their support to this project was enormous. Nnenna Ukaegbu did her best to assist me in some technical aspects of typing this project. I say: God bless her. I thank my 'little' sister, Ijeoma Vivian Ogu, the School librarian who gave all her support to the success of this work. Describing her as my little sister does not mean she is physically small but our relationship is like that of an elder brother and his immediate younger sister.

I appreciate the effort of Engr. Richard Eiguedo, the school computer instructor who did all the technical work involved in the production of this book. I thank the able Secretary to the Attah of Igala who assisted me in getting some of the elders who supplied some of the information I needed. He was always ready to help me each time I went to Idah. I thank Professor Reuben O. Ani for going through this work and giving it necessary and thorough corrections.

Finally I appreciate the financial support of Jude Onyema Amadi (Onwa). I could not mention the names of others whose monetary contribution did not get to us before we went to press. I am grateful to them.

Iyi Ochiagha

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to Romanus Ugwu (Nwodo Nwugwu), a graduate of Mathematics who till his death fought tirelessly to see that Umuezike once again as a people put on her amour of courage, resolute and oneness in fighting her day to day challenges of life.

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FOREWORD

This book titled 'Our Root' is one of those books written for the general public interest to gain information and understanding on life activities of the past and present of a group of people or a community. The book traced the root of a people or community systematically for the understanding of the truth concerning their life activities. The editors have made intensive researches to present things as they were and are through oral interviews of different people and observations from those concerned on the subject matter. The authors of the book exposed distortion of true information of their community history by other people outside their community. The authors presented the history of their community by making elaborate efforts of analysis of information gathering within and outside their community, which can be verified.

This book is one of an attempt to present the much needed past and present history of people, especially the Igbo race where there is scanty information about the history of their people for people to read about.

The reader of this book should try to perceive the book on a perspective of presenting a detailed history and behaviour of a community. The book will encourage other people of various communities to present independent study to their own communities' history. The presentations from various communities can help to produce a very much needed history or root of communities or of a nation.

People who do not know their past will always interpret the world wrongly. They distort the history and try to colour their past history to suit their present position or situation and imaginations thereby misleading the younger generation to believe on fallacy. The younger generation needs a good history of the past to guide them for the future. The Israelites know that they were once servants of the Egyptians but later redeemed by the Almighty God. The record is there in the Holy Bible. The Israelites have not tried to change the history of their generations to suit their present position in the world.

Information very useful that will be derived from this book is very valuable starting from the preface of the book to the last chapter. The process presented how names were identified or

derived in the community through or from the maternal, paternal, or namesake names in origin.

Chapter One traced briefly the history of the Igbos of Nigeria with evidences referred from the Holy Bible and other authors. That chapter traced the history of Umuezike people of Aku town and how they came to settle in Aku now their Home town.

Chapter Two started by presenting the antiphon songs by Umuada Umuezike (Umuezike daughters), and a brief history of Umuezike of Aku town. The names found in Umuezike and other Igboland seem to be related to those names in Igalaland of the present Kogi State of Nigeria. It will also be found there are other towns with which Umuezike has relations. The display of aristocratic pride among the people of Umuezike and their claim of origin from a powerful king the Attah of the Igalaland in Kogi State of Nigeria are narrated in this chapter. That chapter traced the route through which Ezike Attah passed to come to Aku town.

Chapter Three traced the genealogy of Umuerim consisting of the present Uwani Otobo and Amankpo hamlets.

Chapter Four gave the event that promoted Uwani Otobo to the first position or eldest son of Umuezike.

Chapter Five described the relationship among the Umuerim.

Chapter Six discussed about the mystery of Otwa Ejiri deity of Umuezike which is still in existence. It is a mystery that needs to be raveled out scientifically.

Chapter Seven described how yam was introduced into Aku town.

Chapter Eight is on the making of King in Aku. That chapter described how Ugwu Ishihe Omukwu from Umuezike became a paramount chief in Aku.

Chapter Nine dealt with correction of misconceptions of some published articles about Umuezike. The authors of the distorted articles about Umuezike made no investigations before their misconceived publications. Here the editors of this book exposed false information about Umuezike and gave correct information that can be verified by an unbiased umpire.

Chapter Ten summarizes the achievements of Umuezike that proved her descendants as noble and hard working in all aspects of Human endeavours.

Any reader of this book will appreciate the painstaking and thought provoking details contained in it that proved this book as a true history of a community.

Professor Reuben O. Ani
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. 2014

Preface

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People are aware that carrying out a historical research is very tasking. It is more challenging when it involves the history of black Africa where events in the past were hardly recorded in

writing. Most African histories are passed on from one generation to another by oral tradition. The problem with this oral tradition is that it is liable to distortion.

In our search for the origin of our community, Umuezike in Aku, we were faced with the following problems:

A. Oral Traditional History.

There was no existing written history of any sort that could serve as a launching pad to this research. Most information was received orally and from musics and legends.

Some of the individuals we interviewed intentionally wanted to distort history due to some personal sentiment. We came to discover this when we asked them questions on some of the events we actually witnessed. They told the stories in a way that carefully removed every incident that negatively affected their persons, kindreds or hamlets and at the same time not forgetting every sordid detail of events that touched other people. These same individuals told the history of others in a most careless and flat manner. Every one of them was quick to tell us that his ancestor played the most significant role in the history of Umuezike. We interviewed also their perceived rivalries or political opponents from other families. Finally, we met some neutral bodies on same issues and were able to strike a balance. We were able to get the correct order of events in the past and who exactly did this or that, where, how and when.

B. Identification of Names.

There was also a problem of identification of names. This was more challenging and complicated than the first. The success of this research was based on our ability to see through a maze of conflicting names and characters. We discovered that some individuals were surnamed after their mothers' first names or maiden surnames instead of their fathers'. There were reasons to that.

First, their mothers might be materially more influential than their fathers. Second, it might be out of deep love the woman had for her son that he was surnamed after her first name or maiden surname. Third, there might be other people already answering the same name in the family and in order to differentiate him from them, his mother's first name or maiden surname was given as surname. Fourth, it was because of the practice of polygamy then. Each child was surnamed after his mother's first name or maiden surname. Fifth, some individuals grew up from their maternal homes, so they adopted their mothers' maiden surnames. We have multiplying examples of those who were surnamed after their mothers' first names or maiden surnames for one reason or the other.

Some examples of such names in Umuezike are:

- Ani Nwoshinigwe from Uwani-Otobo. Oshinigwe is the name of his mother from Amadionuma in Umuneri Ugwunani. Ani Nwoshinigwe's third son by name Odo Nwani, the father of Titus and Chike Nwani was even referred to as Ugwu Idike Nnadi, a name which came from the same Amadionuma. Ani Nwoshinigwe's father's name is Dinwoke Nwasa. He should have been named Ani Dinwoke Nwasa.
- There was also Nnadi Ogo Nwugwu from the same place with the first person, Umuezikoro Erim in Uwani Otobo. Nnadi is his first name. Ogo Nwugwu is his mother's name. She was from Uwenu-Orinogwu, Amadiefioha. He would have answered Nnadi Ezikanyi Nwarua for are his father's names. It becomes interesting here to find out that even Ezik X the father of Nnadi was surnamed after his own mother. That was why he was called Ezikanyi the son of Arua hence, Ezikanyi

Nwarua. Arua is a woman's name. Therefore one often sees himself landing at the maternal end even when trying to find out the correct order of naming in a family.

- There was Ishihe Omukwu the father of Chief Ugwu Ishihe from Uwani-Otobo. He answered after his mother's name, Omukwu Ezeado from Amaezi Ugwunani.
- In Amankpo, we have Ugbonabu Nwome and his brother, Ochi Nwome. They answered after their mother's maiden surname which originated from Amani Mgboko. Amadi is their father's name.
- Ezeamugwu Okenyi from Umuobara was surnamed after his mother's maiden surname. Didigwu Ezeoka was his father. At times praise-singers (Ogba Igara) refer to him as Ezeamugwu Nneikpa or more confusing, Nneikpa Ezeamugwu Okenyi. The first name of the mother was Nneikpa. Okenyi was her maiden surname.
- There was another man from Umuobara called Didigwu Nwarua Nwefu instead of Didigwu Nwozor. Arua Nwefu was his mother.
- There is Ezike Nwani Nwosemi from Amankpo. Osemi is a name which originated from Amogbo Amabokwu. It is the name of the mother of his grandfather. She was Osemi Idenyi Amenyi.
- Onodi Nwogbuebo could also have answered Onodi Ezugwu which should be the correct name. Ogbuebo is the mother's name.
- Amadi Nwokoro, the father of Christopher Amadi from Uwani Otobo was better known as Amadi Ihuagu. Ihuagu was a maiden surname of his mother from Amankpo. This was to differentiate him from his kinsman, Amadi Okoro, the grandfather of Uzochukwu Okoro.
- Alayi Nwoyar' Ogoro (Aloysius Ozor) from Uwani-Otobo was one of those surnamed after their mothers'. His mother's name is Oyar' Ogoro while Ozor Nwugwu was his father.
- There were two brothers from Umuodeme Anugwu in Uwani-Otobo who answered their mother's name as surname: Amadi Ogidi and Nzute Ogidi. Their mother was Ogidi Nweze from Lejja while their father was Ozor Nwegwuete.
- Charles Ugwu is better known in Uwani-Otobo as Ezike or Charlie Onu-ugo. Onu-ugo is the name of his paternal grandmother, Onu-ugo Ekwueme from Umuaroke Amadiefioha. Charlie's father was Ugwuja Ada. He was also surnamed after a woman's name, Ada. This might have originated from his mother, 'Ada Onugwu Omaga' as the daughters of Onugwu Omaga fondly address each other.
- There was also Ezike Agbogo from Umuaroke Amadiefioha. His correct name is Ezike Ochike.

People can also bear names after their godfathers. There are cases whereby the first names and surnames of their godfathers are lifted in verbatim:

- Ochieka Nwodeke from Uwani-Otobo took his names from his godfather, Ochieka Nwodeke the father of Nwadi Ochieka from Amankpo. The correct order of his names is Ochieka Nwokoro.
- Ani Nworieku from Umuobara got his name from his godfather, Ani Nworieku from Obie. His right name should be Ani Dugwu.
- Ugwu Nwori, who hails from Uwani-Otobo, is called Ugwu Ishihe after his godfather, Chief Ugwu Ishihe. He is addressed as 'Chihe' meaning 'chief' as if he is Chief Ugwu Ishihe.

- Didigwu Ishienyi from Amadiefioha took his name from his godfather who was also his maternal grandfather, Didigwu Ishienyi, from Uwani-Otobo. Till today, all his descendants in Amadiefioha are known as 'Umu Didigwu Ishienyi'. His own father's name can hardly be remembered.
- There is also another Ugwu Ishihe from Amankpo, named after Chief Ugwu Ishihe. To differentiate him from others who answer the same name, his own father's name was annexed at the end, thus Ugwu Ishihe Ihuagu.
- Paulinus Nwodo from Uwani Otobo is often called Ezike Oheme, which is the name of his godfather from Amankpo.
- Ezikanyi Nwenyi from Uwani-Otobo answered after his godfather from Amankpo. He was to be correctly called Ezikanyi Nwanyanwogo Ezea. Some of his children like Barrister Onyeka still adopt Enyi as their surname.

There are cases where people from the same parents answer different surnames. Some will be answering the immediate father's name while others answer either their grandfather's name or great grandfather's name. Some answer double surnames.

For example in Amankpo we have Amukworu Ezeamagu or Amukworu Nwachinevu, all talking of one person. His elder brother is Ezeagu Okagu. From their surnames an outsider can hardly know that they are of the same parents. There are also examples of Vero Igwe and Titus Ugwuanyi, a sister and a brother from Amankpo. The girl was surnamed after her grandfather and the boy took the name of his great grandfather. Emmanuel Enyi Ochike and Amos Onyima are brothers from the same parents in Uwani-Otobo. Emmanuel was surnamed after his great grandfather's name, Ochike Ayaigbo while Amos took his grandfather's name, Onyima Ochike.

There is a young man from Uwani-Otobo called Odo Nwonenyi. He is named after his grandfather, Odo Nwonenyi. The same grandfather was the godfather of this young man's elder brother, Ogbonna (Bethrand Odo). In order to avoid having another Ogbonna in the same family, the name of his grandfather was lifted in verbatim and given to the young Odo Nwonenyi. The two names will be confusing the future generations. One will think the name belonged to one person, but only time and events of their periods will enable future generations to know that they were two, the Odo Nwonenyi of the first generation and his grandson, the Odo Nwonenyi of the third generation. The reason for our going into these details is that we are going to be meeting the same name in this book but belonging to more than one person and at the same time two different names borne by one individual.

In Amadiefioha, there is a family in Umuaroke kindred where we have conflicting names and identity. It is a special case study. That is the family of Umu-Onugwu Omega. Onugwu Omega,

a woman, gave birth to a son, Ochike Onugwu Omega. Ochike Onugwu Omega took his mother's name as a surname instead of his father's. He became the father of Okpe Ochike, Ekwueme Ochike, Odfuruigbo (Ozuruigbo) Ochike and Ochike who answered his father's name.

These are confusing to outsiders especially where we have Ekwueme Ochike and Ochike Ekwueme, Ekwueme Nwodfuruigbo and Odfuruigbo Ekwueme. Let us get them clear. Among the four sons of this Ochike Onugwu, Ekwueme Ochike was the only one who had

one of his sons named Ochike, hence Ochike Ekwueme. He was the father of Nnajaa, Ugwujaa and Odfuruigbo (Emma) Ekwueme.

Ekwueme Nwodfuruigbo, the son of Odfuruigbo Ochike took his first name from his uncle and godfather, Ekwueme Ochike. Also, Odfuruigbo (Emma) Ekwueme took his first name from his grand uncle, Odfuruigbo Ochike, the father of Ekwueme Nwodfuruigbo. So Ekwueme Ochike was different from Ochike Ekwueme likewise Ekwueme Nwodfuruigbo from Odfuruigbo Ekwueme. Ekwueme Ochike was the father of Ochike Ekwueme.

There is still another reason some people are not surnamed following their paternal lines. A situation where newly born babies hardly survive in a family or a lineage is almost going into extinction, a surname is given to show that the baby does not belong to the family. Our mother, Madu Nwonyeozo from Uwani-Otobo was not surnamed after her father, Didigwu Mba from Amadiefioha for fear of losing her like other of her siblings who came before her. So she was called Madu, the child of another person if that would make her to live. For the word ‘onyeozo’ means another person.

People can be surnamed in appreciation to those who took care of their babyhood. Examples: Ogbonna Iyikwu from Amadiefioha. Iyikwu was his elder sister who nursed him. His correct name is Ogbonna or Ibe Nwochike. Ezike Didigwu Nwodo (Nwadidigwu Nwodo) from Uwani-Otobo took his surname from his uncle, Didigwu Nwodo.

Some individuals take other names (nicknames) which often dominate their original names. We have name like Oganenjo Ezea from Uwani-Otobo. His proper name is Diyoke Ezea. There was also Ghana Ishihe instead of Anibueze Ishihe. The name, Ghana is an alias. Even presently, Oke-Oshishi is almost dominating the original names of Jonathan Anyanwogo from Uwani-Otobo. ‘Giant’ was a nickname given to Ugwu Ezeanyi Ugwu. This was because he was ahead of his time in material prosperity. He was also called ‘eze bu n’ugwu’, meaning a king who lives on the hill. He was on top of his age mates which made him a giant indeed. Otherwise there was nothing about his physique that agreed with the nickname. ‘Giant’ so much dominated his name that even today his children are known as umu Giant.

Others are surnamed in association with the place of their birth or habitation thus Ogbuanya Ngodongo from Uwani-Otobo. His correct name is Ogbuanya or Rerent (Lawrence) Nwugwu Ogbunagodo. He is the father of Augustine Ugwu. There was also Ogbonna Uwenu from Amankpo. His correct name should be Ogbonna Ugwueke. We had Ogbonna Oshigo from Oshigo.

C. Problem of actual Dates of Events

There is one particular area we found very difficult to handle, that is the problem of getting down the accurate dates in which certain ^{xiii} took place. In order not to commit unnecessary errors we did not include dates of events of which we were not sure.

Iyi Ochiagha